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THE RAINY SEASON – WHAT IT MEANS FOR STORMWATER SAFETY

San Bernardino County, February 28, 2005 – While Southern California enjoys a sunny climate most of the year, during the winter months residents brace for the “rainy season.” During this wet season, the area can experience days of heavy rainfall and high intensity storms, which not only cloud our normally dry landscape, but produce flooding and mudslides in the mountains and traffic congestion, pollution and urban run-off in the flatlands. This winter, the problem has been compounded by the devastating fires that scorched the mountains and hillsides last year.

So, where does all of this water end up? Millions of gallons of the water and “urban run-off” flow directly into the storm drain system, the vast underground network of pipes and tunnels servicing San Bernardino county. The water flowing through the storm drain system, unlike our sewage system, is not treated and eventually ends up in our oceans, bays and lakes – carrying pollutants and debris with it. On a yearly average, over 40 tons of trash and debris washes up on our beaches, pollutes our waterways, endangers marine life, and ultimately our own healthy lifestyles.

San Bernardino County has established an outreach program, the San Bernardino County Stormwater Public Education Program that targets area residents and businesses with an important message: the debris and trash in our streets and neighborhoods ultimately pollutes our waterways, as well as the nearby lakes, oceans and rivers.

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The multi-faceted awareness campaign incorporates community outreach, corporate partnership programs and targeted advertising in print and broadcast media. The educational program focuses on the key stormwater issues and pollutants, including garbage, litter, tossing cigarette butts in the street, dog waste and the improper use of pesticides and fertilizers.

Some 16 cities in the Inland Empire have united to sponsor the San Bernardino County Stormwater Education Program. The participating cities in San Bernardino County's Stormwater Education program are: **Big Bear Lake, Chino, Chino Hills, Colton, Fontana, Grand Terrace, Highland, Loma Linda, Montclair, Ontario, Rancho Cucamonga, Redlands, Rialto, San Bernardino, Upland and Yucaipa.**

What can be done to reduce the Amount of Debris and Pollution flowing Through the Storm Drain System and into our Waterways during the Rainy Season?

Area Businesses must do their share! The County has produced educational fact sheets, tips cards and POP displays with advice on how to prevent pollution and protect our environmental resources. The material are available free of charge to businesses in the area.

Residents can also pitch in by:

- Picking up litter and yard clippings around their homes.
- Disposing of, or recycling debris via County and City-issued containers.
- Using pesticides and fertilizers properly, and ensuring that household hazardous materials are covered or stored indoors, and that they are never dumped into the storm drains.
- Cleaning up pet waste and flush it down the toilet or disposing of it in your City-issued trash container.

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In addition, San Bernardino County maintains a comprehensive web site with advice, tips and background to help both businesses and residents change their daily behavior when it comes to protecting our natural resources. The web page also features links to other, helpful online resources.

The community outreach program incorporates a proactive in-school component. San Bernardino County offers “free” one-hour classroom presentations for elementary schools. As part of an interactive presentation, students and teachers participate in hands-on and fun sessions on: the water cycle, watersheds, stormwater and stormwater pollutions and ways to prevent stormwater pollution.

Residents, businesses and educators are encouraged to access the county’s helpful material online, by logging onto: www.sbcounty.gov/stormwater.

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